

CENTRAL MONTANA RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL
MAY 8TH & 9TH, 2013
HOLIDAY VILLAGE MALL COMMUNITY CENTER
HAVRE, MONTANA

RAC members Present: Dana Darlington, Aart Dolman, Jim McCollum, Mary Jones, Jason Birdwell, Kris Moser, Ralph Knapp, Ron Poertner, Hugo Tureck, Dan Kluck, Clive Rooney, Wayne Fairchild, Nick Schultz arrived after lunch.

Absent: Dave Reinhardt

BLM staff present: Stan Benes, Mark Albers, Lori Federspiel- note taker, Barney Whiteman, Kenny Keever, Stanley Jaynes, Kaylene Patten-facilitator.

Public Comment Period: The first agenda item of the day was the Public Comment Period. Clive Rooney, as Chairman, opened the Public Comment period.

Gladys Walling of Winifred spoke first. She is concerned about wild, free-roaming bison. She feels that these animals damage fences, cause accidents, threaten their cattle with injury & disease (brucellosis), and cause much greater damage than other wildlife. The transfer of bison should be on hold. (Written statement submitted to be placed on file.)

Linda Newman lives south of the river and is President of Women Involved in Farm Economics (W.I.F.E). She stated that bison are unpredictable, cause danger & destruction to people and property. Restitution is not available for damage from wild bison. Containment is the issue. Free-roaming causes damage. They are problematic to the agriculture industry. Wild, free-roaming bison do not have a place in a civilized society. (Written statement submitted to be placed on file.)

Vicki Hofeldt of Chinook – Containment is key. Wild free-roaming bison can damage fences, destroy haystacks and grass for their livestock, etc. These animals cover a great distance. (Written statement submitted to be placed on file.)

Kit Fischer, Natl. Wildlife Federation, Missoula – Works on Bison Issue. This is an important issue for Montana. No decisions have yet been made. They are not interested in letting bison roam the eastern part of Montana and damage land. They want to have a planned approach to how this could potentially work.

Margo Allderdice of south Chinook – Doesn't see why the buffalo need to be reintroduced to the rest of Montana. We do have a population...they are not endangered. She wants to have documented that she is against the free-roaming bison. She also requested that all opposition be documented. (Written statement submitted to be placed on file.)

Ralph Knapp asked Kit, "What do you see as the catalyst behind bison restoration?" Kit Fischer replied that they are in the business of wildlife conservation. Montana is known for its wildlife. Elk and bighorn sheep wouldn't be here without work that's been done. They do not envision thousands of bison across the plains – just a wild herd number that is manageable.

Dana Darlington asked, “How many is enough? We have several established now.” Kit replied that there is no place in Montana for free bison hunt. They don’t want bison where they shouldn’t be. But, where can they be? The number of them needs to be determined similar to cattle to figure numbers.

Aart Doman asked, “How do you open up a community dialogue?” Kit replied that trust is lacking. It’s gonna take work and lots of conversation. It’s a really emotional issue.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD ENDED

Welcome, Meeting Notes, Agenda Review:

Kaylene went over the Agenda items for Wednesday (8th) and Thursday (9th). There were no changes or additions. There were no changes made to previous meeting’s minutes. The motion was made and seconded to pass as written.

Clive Rooney, as the newly appointed Chairman, stated that he wants to get things done. He asked the members how they can improve their functions and make decisions more quickly.

WHAT HAVE YOU HEARD?

Bison still a hot topic.

Aart Dolman: Rep. Steve Daines had a public comment period on discussions for Rocky Mountain Front in Washington. It ran very well. Aart visited Venezuela. Discussed future advances in shipping. Railroads are big here. What can we do in order to facilitate shipping? The rest of the world is advancing.

Wayne: Nineteen outfitters are on the River. Of those, 6 were at the annual meeting. Outfitters are talking about the put-in at Coal Banks, i.e. no water at the ramp. It’s embarrassing to have a nice ramp and facilities but no water. Recreation fees are also being discussed.

Mary: Vacancies on the RAC. Met new Monument Manager and people have been impressed with Mike.

Jason Birdwell: Huge opposition to user fees on the River. Had one phone call about Russian olive – against removal and spending dollars on this. It’s used for wildlife cover.

Kris Moser: Recreation fees - will hold more comment until afternoon discussion of this agenda item.

Ralph Knapp: People interested in expanding lands with wilderness characteristics. Having public lands for public use.

Ron Poertner: He has the audio of the court proceeding on Monument litigation. Water Compact Commission, CMR & Monument. Public process of comments worked well. Tried to discuss bison management with Washington and where they are going with that. Report on overall view of bison issue coming out of Dept. of Interior’s take on issue. Land swaps, fee issue, rip/rap at Judith Landing needs looked at. Ice moves stuff out.

Hugo Turek: River fees (which will be discussed this pm). People approached Forest Service regarding cutting back on PILT payments due to sequester so wondering about BLM PILT payments. Gov. Bullock veto – Silener Bill. No anger towards Bullock over vetos. Concern about bison. How big an enclosure to have for “fair chase” regarding hunting bison. Drought issues.

Jim McCollum: Focused on Legislature. How BLM relates to bison issue, where bison should be if there are to be bison in the wild. Beyond comprehension that anyone would consider having bison running around like deer and elk – not feasible. But...in support of some bison somewhere.

Jim: Bison...where do they put them? Don't want bison in my backyard.

Clive Rooney: Numbers of documents from BLM that are currently out for review. Need to break cycle of planning. Drought is a concern, as well as fire and hay prices.

Mark Albers: Regarding the RMP issue. BLM didn't plan to have so many plans out at once. With sage grouse and delays they had to be pushed. Stan Benes reiterated Marks comment.

Question from Mary on the Moccasins. Is there going to be a public comment session? There are plans for it but they were postponed.

Suggested that they break for lunch and come back early to have more time for “Recreation Fees” agenda topic.

CLIMATOLOGIST PRESENTATION – Greg Pederson from the U.S. Geological Survey: Greg discussed weather trends and climate change, draught and associated impacts. Temperatures are up, snow levels down and therefore stream levels are down. Spring is coming 10-12 days earlier (spring onset) than 1950. Future projections are for decreased snowpack and more precipitation falling as rain. Earlier stream flow runoff, reduced peak flow and more mid-winter peaks are also predicted.

Why do we expect more rain? Warm air masses – warm air can hold more water than cold air. Future warming is easier to predict than future precipitation. Warming is a sure thing – driving evaporation.

What is the causation of weather patterns? El Nino & La Nina – sea surface temperature affects atmospheric temperatures.

How does pollution affect temperature change? Greenhouse gas projections - Carbon dioxide into the air directly correlates to how much we warm.

What does it take to get a reversible trend to global warming? Need to **remove** carbon dioxide.

What is current thinking on AMOC? Current thinking is that it's not likely to happen.

RECREATION FEES DISCUSSION for UPPER MISSOURI BREAKS WILD & SCENIC RIVER

Mark Schaeffer, the Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner, for the Monument staff gave a presentation of the campgrounds along the Upper Missouri Wild & Scenic River, the current fees charged at Kipp Recreation area and the proposed creation of fees for Judith Landing, Coal Banks Landing and River use fees. Currently going through the process – no fees as of yet.

Kipp started charging fees in 1966. Mark discussed the fee history there to give an example of fees charges vs. amenities offered. Aart Dolman had questions on fees/Golden Age (Senior Pass) discounts for these sites. Source of Fee Proposal UMRBNM Record of Decision & approved RMP Dec. 2008. January 2010 RAC member proposed creation of sub-group to look at fee issue. How long? Where? May-Sept? June 15-Sept. 15? Entire Wild & Scenic River? Certain Sections? How much? Per person? By Group? Charging for boat launch or use of River? Clive mentioned that the River & bed are “State”.

Proposed Fees as follows:

Coal Banks Landing	\$10/night
Judith Landing	\$ 5/night
River Use (Boating Permit)	\$10-30/person, 16 and under free

Feedback Gathered: Keep it simple, use an “iron ranger” and charge by the boat. Majority not opposed to fees if they are reasonable and money collected is used to improve the sites.

Mark discussed the current status of the sites and the cost of doing business. Fees would supplement amenity costs.

It was asked why the BLM spends so much money on garbage collection. There is no garbage collection on most major rivers in the US. There is a pack it in – pack it out policy and this could be an option to save dollars. It was also asked how much money does BLM get for this area? Mark stated that his budget is \$145,000 – which mostly goes to staff. Mary asked why we don’t get more dollars. We already pay with our taxes. Dana Darlington said there’s 80,000 acres of private land in this area....where’s my 3%? Regarding user fee, most people in general are ok with it. Best plan is using an “iron ranger” with an informational board stating what the fees will go towards. Thumbs down on mandatory charging.

Clive asked that they start the process of discussion with the group.

Kris: Have received lots of feedback. There was an article in the Lewistown newspaper that sent a mixed message. Comments ranged from triple dipping, paying taxing, camping fees, etc. some feel it’s unfair to take one year of sequestration and turn it into years of fees. This is a low income area, some feel like it’s a loss of freedom to have to pay to camp, even though it’s not much money. It feels like they’re being asked for another fee when they have less & less discretionary dollars already. It is incumbent of the BLM to ask themselves, is the beneficial need more important for BLM than for the public?

Aart: Suggested that a voluntary collection box be tried.

Ron: There's a concern that if special designations are made, then Washington Office should fund them. If you can't raise taxes then local managers get hit. This affects local communities. We add monuments (special designations) that add more people, etc.

Nick: What is the trend for use the last 3 years? Mark replied that it has been stable. If Washington Office reduces funding, why does the user have to fill in the gap? Can't answer.....rhetorical.

Jim: How much do the commenters use the river? Philosophical question rather than actual users.

Most outfitters don't mind user fees (they pay 3%). Would like to see those using the area all pay fees. Want to see workable situation.

Hugo: There's a \$25 permit fee for the Smith River, plus a non-refundable fee to apply. Haven't heard of anyone that minds the fees. Locals don't use the river the same way as floaters/visitors.

Jason: Everyone else has covered topics. Main thing is that BLM hears the voice of the people he deals with – they are opposed to all fees.

Ron: Like Dana's suggestion . Why can't BLM partner with someone to get dollars to assist? Foundation giving \$ to Govt?

Dan: Agree with Dana's proposal.

Coal Banks/Judith Landing aspect of proposal for camping fees. What is the opinion regarding camping fee as opposed to river fee? Tent/trailer sites.

Aart stated that there should be a fee for camping.

What does the BLM want from the RAC? Clive read the January meeting minutes.

Stan Benes: Fees at campgrounds makes sense. Facts of sequestration - 48% of budget we had last year will be going away. Like to start with support for idea Dana suggested. Try the fees. Mark Albers stated that campgrounds in our District charge fees. Pay for more? Do you want amenities cut back or not? Stan said there is public support for fees, if they go back into the area – people are ok with it. Fees would come right back to the program.

Ralph: Support fees with amenities in return. Most people are willing to pay \$5-\$10 to enjoy.

What amenities? No RV dump. No matter what we pay – we expect stuff in return. Down the road if we change camping fee, is something more going to be expected? Do we create more problems? Same idea as river fee – try donation fee box.

Hugo: Floating & camping needs to be separate.

Majority does not support River fee. Possibly Dana's idea for an Iron Ranger on a voluntary basis.

RE: River Fee – Who supports mandatory fees on the River? Some in favor, but motion fails.

Dana moves that the RAC recommends trying an “Iron Ranger” for one year donation basis based on explanation as to what fees will be used for.

Jason: How do we measure failure or success?

Dana: Based on percentage of watercraft users that pay fees.

Jason: What happens if it’s deemed a failure?

Dana: As we represent constituents, we say we did this....it failed...we gave it a shot. If you want these amenities, now you’ll have to pay.

Ralph seconds the motion made by Dana.

If we have a camping fee – money overlap and take care of portion or all of what you need to use as launch fee. Maybe river permit moot if we have camping fee? Commercial guests are paying so private users should pay.

Proposal as written vote: * Consensus”

Resolution of Camping Fees –

Ralph: Proposes Mandatory (level 1) overnight camping fees. Hugo seconds.

Dollar Amount: Coal Banks - \$10/night Judith - \$5/night

Ralph makes Amendment to motion for fees & Hugo seconds.

Clive says administrative details are up to the BLM.

Day use not included.

Motion Passes

It was brought up that we don’t lose concept that Ron brought up regarding grants from conservation groups, land funds, etc.

Stan Benes reminded the RAC that it is not a decision making group for the BLM.

BISON ISSUE – Mike Volesky, DFWP Deputy Director

Mike asked if everyone got to read the letter from MFW&P Director, Jeff Hagener. This is it in a nutshell...on nontribal lands outside of the Greater Yellowstone Area, the department has no plans to move bison anywhere in the State of Montana. There’s an attempt at a programmatic EIS on bison discussions. There are no pre-determined outcomes. For perspective, they are not talking hundreds or thousands of bison...if even any at all. There will be a local working group when/if discussions begin. Public comments, fencing, disease, etc. would all need to be discussed.

Ralph: Why is BLM in the process? Mike mentioned that the CMR has been discussed with potential for bison.

Mark Albers: BLM is involved with bison as livestock. BLM doesn't have anything to do with free ranging bison.

If looking at CMR, as an ecological unit, you'd have to look at surrounding lands, including BLM.

Nick: When is this scheduled? Mike stated that there is no schedule for the programmatic EIS. Is the synopsis for comments done? It has been put on the back burner.

Dana: What is the driving force that this is something FW&P needs to be involved in? Mike: 40 of 56 counties have domestic bison. A number of groups have interest and FW&P works for everyone. It's the only wildlife we haven't brought back to manage. Why have all our eggs in one basket, especially with the special genetics?

Good fences and good food keep bison pretty trouble free.

Ron: Lots of planning has been going on for a long time. Seems like its been pushed with plans on books with FW&P and DOI.

There's no push from Interior where the State isn't willing to take the lead.

The government should actively seek opportunities to place bison in appropriate places. Nobody wants them in their back yard.

Elk have more brucellosis than bison.

RUSSIAN OLIVE REMOVAL – Kenny Keever, Natural Resource Specialist – Weeds, BLM Monument Staff

Kenny presented a power point presentation on the removal of Russian olive on the Marias & Missouri Rivers. Russian olive management is highly controversial yet allowing it to escape unchecked has environmental and economic consequences in riparian areas and irrigation systems. It's noxious weed status in Montana is a Priority 3 – Regulated Plant (Not Montana Listed Noxious Weeds). These regulated plants have the potential to have significant negative impacts. The plant may not be intentionally spread or sold other than as a contaminant in agricultural products. The state recommends research, education and prevention to minimize the spread of the regulated plants.

Much of the increase in riparian forest in the Upper Reach of the Missouri River can be attributed to an increase in invasive Russian olive. There is the possibility of Russian olive becoming the dominant or co-dominant tree on the upper Missouri River. Russian olive can affect vegetation composition and structure and can change the site's potential. They can also displace native trees and shrubs, forming monotypic stands that alter ecosystems. The current extent of Russian olive on the Missouri and Marias (below Tiber) is still manageable if resources can be allocated to address it.

Management is targeted for riparian habitat, not backyards and shelterbelts. Research is ongoing to find ways to make Russian olive less invasive. Biological control that impacts development of viable seed (does not kill the plant), development of a sterile plant for future plantings and

developing restoration/re-vegetation guidelines to help move sites back to desired plant community are some options.

The day was concluded with an informational DVD of the BLM's Wild Horse Documentary.

THURSDAY, MAY 9TH, 2013

RAC members Present: Dana Darlington, Aart Dolman, Jim McCollum, Mary Jones, Jason Birdwell, Kris Moser, Ralph Knapp, Ron Poertner, Hugo Tureck, Dan Kluck, Clive Rooney, Nick Schultz.

Absent: Dave Reinhardt & Wayne Fairchild

BLM staff present: Stan Benes, Mark Albers, Lori Federspiel- note taker, Barney Whiteman, Kenny Keever, Kathy Tribby, Kaylene Patten-facilitator.

District Manager Updates:

Stan Benes began the discussion. Positions are not getting filled. BLM puts more money in the coffers than we take out. If sequestration continues, we will be at 48% of last year's budget and we won't be able to fill more positions and services will be going away.

Sage grouse amendment to be completed by next year. Feeling good about where we are on that./ Lewistown RMP was launched Tuesday (5/7)./ Prescribed burning on 1700 acres – support dollars from Wild Turkey Federation & Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation./ Public Affairs Specialist position newly filled by Jonathan Moore. He will become the facilitator for the RAC./ Stan is the Chair of the BLM Access Board and participates in the Interagency effort./ Drought letters already going out to permittees in southern part of the state. Serious concerns./ May try to get a River Trip planned... May 30th./ Clarification of comment yesterday that RAC is not a decision making body. Appreciates the groups opinions – not getting pushy. Sometimes we (BLM) are told what to do from higher up the organization.

Mark Albers, Hi-Line District Manager, thanked RAC Members for coming out to the RMP Meeting last night. Once comments from the public meetings are compiled, issues will be brought to the RAC. There have been requests for extensions to the comment period. Due to time limits we may not be able to do that./ Hi-Line has been pretty lucky in getting positions filled and we are close to a full staff. / Chester RMP public meeting is tonight and Great Falls meeting is Monday night.

Aart stated that the public's request for an extension is understandable with several RMP's coming out at once and it's also a busy time of year, etc.

All plans with sage grouse components need to be completed by a certain date. Need balance between commercial activity and sage grouse protections.

NLCS Strategy Presentation – David Lefevre of the BLM's Montana State Office, Billings

David presented the background on the National Landscape Conservation System. These are Special designation lands that were designated by presidential proclamation, i.e. Monuments, Wild & Scenic Rivers, Pompey's Pillar, Bear Trap Canyon WSA, Historic Trails, etc. David supplied everyone with a handout, "The National Landscape Conservation System 15-Year Strategy – The Geography of Hope" which includes the mission, vision, components, history and goals for the NLCS.

Mary stated that designations are important because people become more aware of these special areas.

Comments on the NLCS strategy can be sent or emailed to Dave.

CAMPGROUND FEE PROPOSAL – Camp Creek & Montana Gulch – Presented by Kathy Tribby, Malta BLM

100% of the fees collected are used for maintenance and facilities. These are the only two fee sites areas in the Hi-Line District. The biggest use is from locals. Currently the fees are:

Montana Gulch	\$3/night
Camp Creek	\$5/night

These prices have stayed the same since they were put in place several years ago. Approximately \$3,000/yr. is collected in fees from these sites. Costs are currently over \$13,000.00 for maintenance, etc.

The boundary of the campground needs to be marked for law enforcement. We are hoping to add an “Iron Ranger” to the Horse Camp area. This is the highest priority for travel management planning. We will need funding for maps to show trails, skill levels, open vs. closed roads, etc. Zortman Station staff has provided assistance that has helped save dollars. Compared to other sites, the current fees are low. Some public have even suggested increasing fees, especially if it helps with signs, etc. PROPOSING TO RAISE FEE AT EACH SITE FROM \$3-\$5.

PROPOSED NEW PRICING:

Montana Gulch	\$8/night
Camp Creek	\$ 10/night

We are looking for recommendations as to whether or not to raise fees.

Nick made the motion to recommend approval as proposed by B LM staff. Kris Moser Seconds the motion. We have consensus. Fees based on amenities.

Note: Aart thinks fees are too low.

*****PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: No public present*****

HI-LINE HISTORY – Josh Chase, Archaeologist, Havre BLM

Josh began his presentation by showing pictures and giving descriptions of some of our historic Regional History:

Medicine Rock – South Phillips County

Lonesome Lake (Bull Grunt) – dense tipi ring site in northern Chouteau County

Grouse Gulch Cave – Little Rockies

Lookout Cave – Little Rockies

Henry Smith – prehistoric components, cairns & drive line - North of Malta

Bootlegger – drive alley up from river – Tiber Reservoir
Shaker – deflated terrace, boggy bottom – Marias River
Laundry Springs – lithic scatter – North Valley County
Significant Events in our Local History:

- Lewis & Clark Exploration, 1803-1806
- Fur Trade, 1780's-1850's
- Fort Benton
- US Army, Indian Wars
- Open Range Cattle Industry, 1850's – 1920's
- Famous Outlaws (Kid Curry)
- Railroad, 1890's
- Homestead Act
- Colorful History of Hi-Line Towns

More pictures and descriptions of features on BLM Land in our Hi-Line District:

Missouri Breaks Cabin

Dunk Tank – dip vat

Great Northern Railroad – amazing feat to build this line

Homestead – shotgun house – North Malta

Signature Panel – Valley County

Kevin CPU (Central Power Unit) – only one west of the Mississippi River (This brought about lots of discussion)

WWII Aerial Bomb – found in Chouteau County – on display in BLM's Havre Field Office

Snake Creek School – 1920's-1990's – Valley County

Bunker Homestead – Blaine County

CURRENT BLM PROJECTS

Zortman Ranger Station – rebuilding foundation. Aart suggested contacting Ken Sieverts of Great Falls, an architect for historic buildings.

Marias River Inventory – Cultural inventory on Barrett site.

Aaniih Nakoda College Cultural Resource Inventory Class – 3 day accredited class at Fort Belknap College

Beaucoup Field School – Partnering with Montana State University

Lookout Cave Pictures – Sacred Sites Research

Regular duties for Josh include monitoring, inventories, implementing laws, reviewing cultural resources, coordinating partnerships, public outreach and education.

It was asked, “Any preliminary thinking of Keystone Pipeline?” Only about 15 miles of BLM land are in the pipeline corridor.

Agenda Topics for Next Meeting:

- State Director update on where BLM is heading?
- Field Trip
- Fire Season update
- DM update
- HiLine RMP comments
- Sage Grouse Plan update

Next Meeting:

Date: September 18-19, 2013

Location: Lewistown Field Office Conference room

Times: 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 – 12:00

Public Comment Period: 10:00 a.m. each day, plan hot topics around public comment period

Social: Yes

Meeting Adjourned at 12:05 p.m.